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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6351
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 2552

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 MEXICO 001229

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/MEX, WHA/PDA,
STATE FOR OES/IHB, PA, CAPRESS
STATE FOR MED/DASHO (MCFADDEN, RINALDO, KEYES)
STATE FOR MED/DIR (PENNER)
STATE FOR DS/IP/WHA
CDC FOR CCID/NCPDCID, CCID/NCIRD and COGH/DGPPC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC CVIS CASC KSCA TBIO MX

SUBJECT: SITREP 8 - H1N1 Outbreak in Mexico

¶1. (U) SUMMARY:

At a press conference on May 1, Secretary of Health Cordova announced that the GOM has confirmed 358 cases of H1N1 and 15 deaths. The GOM will process 500 additional cases in its labs today. Embassy Mexico will be open for normal business on May 6, but has suspended non-emergency public services until May 11.

¶2. (U) FEDERAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS:

-- President Calderon and Foreign Affairs Secretary Espinosa personally received an airplane from China with medical supplies valued in USD 5 million.

--The Inter-American Development Bank announced that it will lend Mexico USD 3 billion to cushion the economy from the impact of the H1N1 Influenza outbreak. The peso appreciated .5 percent to 13.77 at this news.

¶3. (U) ACTIONS BY NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Nothing new to report.

¶4. (SBU) STATISTICS:

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

At a press conference on May 1, the Secretary of Health announced that the GOM has confirmed 358 cases of H1N1 and 15 deaths. Of the 15 dead:

--11 were in the Federal District, 2 in the State of Mexico; one in Oaxaca and one in Tlaxcala;

--11 were female and 4 were male;

--9 of the 15 were between 15 and 40 years old.

The GOM will process 500 additional cases in its labs today.

The families of 86 confirmed H1N1 victims have been visited by doctors.

The government has distributed 36,000 doses of Osetamivir, 11,000 in the Federal District.

STATE GOVERNMENT:

NOTE: Below is based on press reports and represents best available data at this time on distribution of cases among states.
Discrepancies exist between state and federal data.

KEY: Column one - probable cases; Column 2 - cases with atypical pneumonia; Column 3 - deaths reported by state governments; Column 4 - deaths reported by federal government; ND - no data.

Auguascalientes	81, 43, 3, 0
Baja	6, 0, 0, 3
Baja sur	0, 0, 0, ND
Campeche	1, 0, 0, ND
Chiapas	0, 0, 0, ND
Chihuahua	3, 0, 0, ND
Coahuila	37, 0, 0, ND
Colima	0, 1, 0, ND
D.F.	115, 89, 28, 51
Durango	25, 0, 0, ND
EDOMEX	64, 76, 9, 16
Guanajuato	14, 0, 0, ND
Guerrero	19, 14, 1, ND
Hidalgo	188, 32, 0, ND
Jalisco	40, 0, 0, ND
Michoacan	83, 29, 0, 1

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Morelos	20, 4, 0, ND
Nayarit	11, 0, 0, ND
Nuevo Leon	37, 0, 1, ND
Oaxaca	70, 1, 1, 2
Puebla	74, 7, 0, ND
Queretaro	76, 5, 0, 1
Quintana Roo	14, 2, 1, ND
San Luis Potosi	121, 14, 14, 14
Sinaloa	0, 0, 0, ND
Sonora	0, 0, 0, ND
Tabasco	54, 0, 0, ND
Tamaulipas	11, 37, 1, 1
Tlaxcala	390, 43, 0, ND
Veracruz	69, 1, 0, ND
Yucatan	124, 0, 0, ND
Zacatecas	12, 0, 0, ND
Total	1763 398 59 92

¶5. (U) MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

To date, Embassy Mexico has tested 12 staff or EFMs for H1N1 influenza with one test showing a probable case. Seven staff or EFMs have been treated with antiviral medication. The health unit reports a slight increase in the number of patients coming for treatment. Patients coming to the health unit have been mildly ill.

¶6. (U) SECURITY ISSUES:

Nothing new to report.

¶7. (U) CONSULAR ISSUES:

The Embassy will be open for normal business May 6, but non-emergency public services will remain closed until May 11.

Embassy Mexico will activate a call center if Embassy Mexico switchboard operators receive more than 1,000 calls per day. However, call numbers appear to be declining. We received roughly 110 calls within the past 24 hours. Consulates report a low level of H1N1 related calls.

Merida: Post released an updated Warden Message on April 30. Post assisted one USC who is hospitalized in Cancun with suspect symptoms. The hospital diagnosed him with pneumonia but his hotel has refused to readmit him until he presents test results showing he is free of H1N1 influenza. The test results are expected by tomorrow morning. (more details by separate e-mail to CONS and CA/OCS)

Monterrey: Post distributed an updated Warden Message on April 30.

18. (U) CONSULATE ISSUES:

CIUDAD JUAREZ: According to the Chihuahua Secretary of Health there are now 7 possible cases in Chihuahua and 8 in El Paso.

GUADALAJARA: State of Jalisco Governor Emilio Gonzalez Marquez announced that state officials would establish checkpoints for sanitary control on the 5 federal highways and 18 state roads linking Jalisco with neighboring states. These checkpoints would begin on May 1 and be in effect for an undetermined time. State education officials are considering whether schools should remain closed through May 11. No decision has yet been announced.

While public offices are closed, many businesses remain open, including stores and restaurants, as well as the public spaces used

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for "tianguis" or open air markets. The National Chamber of Commerce of Guadalajara (Canaco) reported that since the beginning of the epidemic, the metropolitan zone of Guadalajara has lost an estimated 600 million pesos, or a drop of 60% of total member sales.

The agriculture secretary announced that in Jalisco some 250 thousand pigs that should have been sold to producers remain unsold because of a drop in demand for pork. Jalisco has 1200 pork producers that account for 30 thousand jobs.

HERMOSILLO: No new cases of H1N1 have been reported in the Hermosillo consular district. One possible case tested negative. The Arizona ports of entry are reporting moderate traffic, not inconsistent with an average holiday weekend. Duty officer received no calls about the H1N1 influenza over the past 24 hours.

MERIDA: There are no confirmed case of H1N1 in Yucatan or Campeche. There are reports of 2 positive cases of Influenza A in Quintana Roo but the cases have not been confirmed positive for H1N1. In Yucatan, the State has instituted daily press briefings and will increase public outreach. The Secretary of Health noted that there are sufficient vaccines for the population but that pharmacies require a prescription to avoid panic buying leading to depletion of supplies. Local press is starting to focus more on the economic impact to the tourism sector, particularly in Cancun and the Riviera Maya.

MONTERREY: Campaign rallies for the Nuevo Leon gubernatorial race have been postponed, and the campaigns for federal Congressional seats may be postponed as well. The San Luis Potosi government closed nightclubs, restaurants, bars and health clubs, and is disinfecting public buses. The San Luis Potosi public and private hospitals have supplies of anti-viral medication. In Coahuila, the government is distributing 500,000 face masks, and Tamiflu is also available. Media reporting continues to be straightforward on the number of suspected cases, the government's request to close non-essential businesses and the reaction of business leaders.

In Nuevo Leon, many employers have closed administrative offices, but production lines continue operating. In SLP, the secretary of

economy agreed that it is not feasible to close many businesses, and suggested that the private sector take steps (washing hands etc) to prevent spreading the flu. In Durango the large employers association Canicintra only agreed to close May 1, although 6,000 non essential Durango government employees are off until May 6. In Coahuila and Zacatecas the governments recommended postponing parties at restaurants, hotels and closing bars and bullfights, but it was not clear if those recommendations are being followed. Traffic was light but supermarkets remained open and well stocked.

NUEVO LAREDO: The public is calm and some citizens continue to wear face masks. Local media reports 9 suspected cases of H1N1 in Nuevo Laredo but still no confirmed cases. The consulate received two calls from prospective applicants inquiring when the Consulate will resume services to the public. Restaurants and grocery stores remain open to the public.

TIJUANA: Baja California and Baja California Sur continue to report there are no confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza. Baja California state health officials are reporting that there are ten hospitalized patients with symptoms of H1N1 flu. Three of the patients are showing improvement and the other seven are in stable condition. Twelve samples have been sent to Mexico City for testing. The Catholic Church announced the suspension of mass for all churches in Tijuana Archdiocese but all scheduled events (baptisms and weddings) would continue.

The San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Ports of Entry are reporting lighter than expected border crossings for a holiday weekend. Baja California has begun monitoring all entry points--land border crossings, ports, and highways (airport monitoring had already been implemented) to try to minimize the entry of infected persons. The Consulate received two calls related to the flu from travelers concerned that airports would be closed or they would not be allowed to return.

19. (U) MEDIA REACTION/GENERAL POPULATION SENTIMENTS:

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May 1 coverage of the H1N1 influenza in the Mexican press focused on the increase in the number of reported cases. According to Health Secretary Cordova there are 358 confirmed cases and 15 deaths from the H1N1 virus in Mexico. In a press conference Secretary Cordova stated, "It is important to highlight that the government's plan is working... and that it has allowed us to keep this situation within controllable levels." The Secretary also pointed out that Mexico has collaborated closely with U.S. and Canadian health authorities as well as the WHO. A radio newscast from Radio Imagen reported that the U.S. installed a laboratory in Mexico where a group of scientists can diagnose the H1N1 virus, and that 11 more scientists from the CDC will travel to Mexico to train local personnel.

Newspaper Excelsior's front page story recounts how Mexico City residents are facing discrimination in other states and how Mexicans have faced the same in other countries for fear of the disease. There are also reports that there are 8 new confirmed cases in Europe. Also prominent in the media is the story that a member of President Obama's advance team that came to Mexico was showing symptoms of possible H1N1 infection.

Several outlets also mentioned the European Union's rejection of France's proposal to suspend flights to and from Mexico. Mexico's Secretary of Transport and Communications guaranteed that all transport services were guaranteed and that his agency is in contact with his counterparts from other nations to maintain the highest security and health standards in air travel.

A poll by Consulta Mitofsky shows that 75% of Mexicans believe that the government has taken appropriate actions. Jose Carreno, former Washington correspondent for El Universal, stated in a Radio Formula newscast, "These figures show that the government's communication strategy has been effective." The same poll shows that 45% also believe the government is withholding information. Analysts point

out that there has been a huge amount of rumors circulating the internet - including that the H1N1 was developed as a weapon, and that the outbreak is meant to help pharmaceutical companies. Reforma's Sergio Sarmiento wrote, "The capacity to create conspiracy theories is amazing... but speculation and deceit can be very dangerous for society." Excelsior's Jorge Fernandez Menendez added, "We must dismiss all these conspiracy theories because they also alter our perception of the reality and undermine institutional solutions and society's effort to cope with what is going on."

¶10. (U) ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Bank of Mexico, Ministry of Finance and a private Mexican bank predict that the Mexican economy will contract by between 4 and 5% in 2009 before the impact of the H1N1 flu outbreak is taken into account. All agree that the emergency actions (the temporary closure of restaurants in Mexico City and the temporary suspension of non-essential activities in the public and private sectors throughout Mexico) may reduce the GDP by an additional .3 to .5%.

According to the press, the Mexican Hotel Association reports hotels in Mexico City have an occupancy rate of between 8% and 10%, and that 90% of reservations for the long weekend have been cancelled. The industry expects to lose about 100,000 jobs as a result of the outbreak.

Coparmex, a union that represents about 4.8 million workers, reports absenteeism has been between 1 and 3%. Most of the employees on leave are parents who stayed home for childcare reasons.

Many multinational companies, such as Pepsico, Dupont, IBM and Phillip Morris have implemented emergency plans. Most of them are allowing employees to telecommute.

¶11. (U) TRANSPORTATION

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The Mexican Secretary for Communications and Transportation and his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of Transportation LaHood, held a second conversation regarding the pandemic the morning of 1 May. OST at USDOT will have details of the conversation.

MASS TRANSIT: Directors for civil protection at the Mexico City (STC) and Washington, DC (WMATA) subway systems spoke 1 May via Embassy conference call. Discussion focused on exchange of pandemic plans, precautions in place in the STC system, and contingency measures to guarantee operations. Mexico City ridership appears steady at 2-2.5 million riders per day (50% off normal) and screening is in place. STC screeners found 3 "probable" influenza cases this week and referred them to hospitals. STC officials do not know the final disposition of the referred cases. Teams equipped with hand sanitizer rove the network cleaning passengers' hands. For employees, a liberal leave policy is in place and absenteeism is approximately 30%. The system's tripwire to reconsider reducing service is a new spike in flu cases. Rather than full closure, the proposed response would restrict crowds in stations and volume on trains (a full train can hold 1,800 passengers).

AIR TRAVEL: Outbound passenger screening is up and running at Mexico's major airports and is not delaying flight departures. Inbound load factors continue at low levels while outbound flights are well-sold for now. With few passengers arriving, foreign nationals in Mexico advancing their departures, and few Mexican nationals traveling abroad, a pass through effect should kick in within a week, resulting in reduced outbound passenger loads. Continental became the first U.S. airline to announce it would cut capacity on Mexico routes, by culling flights by its 50-passenger Embraer regional jets. The move brings capacity in line with demand and does not come unexpected. Continental operates the most

extensive U.S. network in Mexico. Other U.S. airlines may also reduce flight frequency, but intend to maintain ample service. As a basis against which to measure cuts, the standard daily flight count between the U.S. and Mexico approaches 300 flights in each direction.

¶12. (U) US ASSISTANCE

USG response to date includes:

--the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has deployed 17 technical experts to Mexico to date who are working with their counterparts and international experts to investigate and prevent the spread of influenza and to consult with Mexico on community mitigation strategies; (We expect more CDC experts to arrive over the coming days)
--USAID has donated \$5 million to the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization;
--the Department of Health and Human Services provided 400,000 courses of Tamiflu;
--the Department of Agriculture has provided technical assistance for animal testing.
--Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has approved the shipment of 100,000 personal protection kits (PPE) similar to the Northcom January 2009 donation. The value of the PPEs themselves is \$875,000 and the airfreight is \$100,000, or a total value of \$975,000. The PPE shipment is scheduled to arrive May 2. OFDA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have coordinated delivery and customs clearance.

¶13. (SBU) US ASSISTANCE CONTINUED

The HHS donation of 400,000 courses of Tamiflu was delivered to GOM officials on May 1. Embassy Mexico did not publicly announce the donation at the request of Los Pinos, the Mexican NSC equivalent.

BASSETT